

DOW today

BENZENE CEILING LEVEL LOWERED TO TEN PPM

Kelly - Scharnweber
Ed Baile
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The Dow Chemical Company has announced a new internal standard for occupational exposure to benzene by setting a workplace ceiling concentration of 10 parts per million (ppm). This is 15 ppm lower than the existing ceiling concentration of 25 ppm required by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

The change is effective immediately and has been communicated to Dow locations worldwide. The lowering of the excursion level to the same parts per million as the permissible exposure limit was announced by Dr. Charles Scharnweber, Dow's Corporate Medical director. The announcement followed action by the company's Industrial Health Board, the group responsible for establishing health standards for more than 52,000 Dow employees.

"New findings in a major epidemiological study on benzene workers in our Midland, Michigan, production location caused us to reconsider our position on benzene exposure," Scharnweber stated.

"Ironically, our Benzene Issue Management Team was preparing for the OSHA public hearing on benzene and our initial position was that the current OSHA standard should be continued. This standard allows a 10 ppm eight-hour time-weighted average exposure, with a 25 ppm ceiling concentration.

"The epidemiological study of 594 employees was reported last year and, at that time, two instances of leukemia were known. Social security records had been utilized to identify the deceased among former employees of the company. One former employee originally presumed to be alive now has been identified as having died of leukemia in 1965," Scharnweber revealed.

"At this time, information on the third leukemia case is not sufficient to relate to benzene work practices within Dow. The employee worked only 30 months for Dow, and for 17 months he worked in an area where benzene exposures were .3 to 14.7 ppm time-weighted average. There are 28 years of the individual's employment history unknown to us which we are trying to trace. He left the company 13 years before his death.

"From a review of the exposure data in our study, we conclude that a substantial improvement in the workplace environment can be achieved by lowering the ceiling level of exposure to benzene to 10 ppm. We continue to believe that if exposure can be limited to the current accepted level (i.e. 10 parts per million for an eight-hour time-weighted average) and excursions limited to the same 10 ppm level — primarily through improved work practices — our employees will be protected from the hazards of benzene," the Dow Medical director said.

The timing of the announcement by Dow is being made three days after the decision of the company's Industrial Health Board, which is as soon as employees in various Dow locations could be informed of the changed level of exposure. Copies of the study with the new data were delivered to appropriate government agencies.

"There was no intention on the part of Dow to make this announcement close to the opening of the OSHA public hearing. We are making it as soon as we can following our decision to lower the ceiling level for our people," Scharnweber concluded.

INDIANAPOLIS SALES OFFICE MOVES TO NEW LOCATION

The Dow Chemical U.S.A. Indianapolis Sales Office has moved into the new Dow Research and Administration Center in Indianapolis, Ind. The sales office's phone number now is (317) 873-7000. The new address is:

Dow Chemical U.S.A.
Sales Office
P. O. Box 68511
9550 N. Zionsville Road
Indianapolis, Ind. 46268

NEW ADDRESS FOR PORTO ALEGRE OFFICE

The Porto Alegre, Brazil, Office of Dow Chemical Latin America has a new address:
Av. Amazonas, No. 522
Caixa Postal No. 3048
Sao Geraldo, Porto Alegre, RS
Brazil

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